

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: POSITIVE GERMAN PRESS REACTION TO US-FRG
TANK HARMONIZATION PROGRAM

REF: STATE 192943 DTG 041745Z AUG 76

1. THE GERMAN PRESS HAS REACTED VERY POSITIVELY TOWARD THE US-FRG TANK HARMONIZATION PROGRAM WHICH WAS ANNOUNCED BY THE DEFENSE MINISTRY YESTERDAY. ALL ARTICLES WHICH WE HAVE SEEN DESCRIBE THE ADDENDUM IN FAVORABLE TERMS, WITH THE ARTICLES REPORTING IN GREATER OR LESS DETAIL THE FACTS OF THE HARMONIZATION PROGRAM AS SET FORTH IN REFTEL. THERE HAVE BEEN NO EDITORIALS YET.

2. THE "FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG" (FAZ: CONSERVATIVE, INDEPENDENT) WROTE OF THE "SURPRISINGLY POSITIVE RESULT" OF DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER'S AND SECRETARY OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEFENSE RUMSFELD'S EFFORTS TO TAKE STANDARDIZATION

SERIOUSLY. THE "SUEDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG" (SZ: INDEPENDENT, LIBERAL) WROTE THAT THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN LEBER AND RUMSFELD WAS VIEWED IN BONN AS "SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS" TOWARD STANDARDIZATION OF WEAPONS SYSTEMS WHICH ALWAYS FAILED IN THE PAST BECAUSE OF THE DIFFERENT ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF THE PARTNER STATES. THE "SZ" POINTED OUT THAT BOTH PARTNERS WERE NOW PROTECTED UNDER THE LICENSING ARRANGEMENTS AND THAT JOBS IN EACH COUNTRY WOULD NOT BE ENDANGERED BY THE PRODUCTION OF FOREIGN PARTS. THE "SZ" REPORTED FURTHER THAT, IN THE FMOD VIEW, THE STANDARDIZATION DECISION WAS A MEANINGFUL STEP TOWARD IMPROVEMENT OF NATO'S DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY AND CONVENTIONAL MEANS OF DETERRENCE.

3. THE PRESS NOTED THAT THE FINAL DECISION ABOUT THE GUN HAD BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL JANUARY 15, BUT THAT THE GERMANS NEEDED A GUN BY MARCH 1977. IT REPORTED THAT THE U.S. WAS INTERESTED IN BOTH THE GERMAN AND BRITISH GUNS, ALTHOUGH THE BRITISH GUN WAS NOT READY FOR PRODUCTION. THE PRESS POINTED OUT THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO MEET THE ABOVE DEADLINE IF THE LEOPARD WAS TO REACH THE BUNDESWEHR BY 1979. THE "FAZ" OBSERVED THAT IT WAS "QUESTIONABLE" WHETHER THE BRITISH HAD A CHANCE TO MEET THE DEADLINE.

4. THE PRESS ALSO REFERRED TO THE POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE SALES OF EITHER THE GERMAN OR AMERICAN VERSIONS OF THE TANK TO MEET NATO DEMAND IN THE 1980'S. THIS DEMAND WAS REPORTED TO BE SOME 10,000 TANKS. FINALLY, THE PRESS REPORTED THAT BONN BELIEVED THE AMERICANS WOULD OPT FOR THE GERMAN TRACK.
HILLENBRAND

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